



PRESS RELEASE

Through October 14th 2006

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Explore Nature and Research at the Patuxent Wildlife Festival

Celebrate the Annual Patuxent Wildlife Festival, Saturday October 14th from 10am to 3pm at the National Wildlife Visitor Center in Laurel, MD. See live animal demonstrations, explore habitats on wildlife conservation tram tours, view research exhibits, hike trails, engage in children's crafts, and explore behind-the-scenes areas of the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center including endangered whooping crane facilities. All activities are free (except tram tours).

Visitors will gain insight into the history of research and the unique partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey as the agencies celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week and Earth Science Week.

According to Dr. Judd A. Howell, Center Director of the U.S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, "The behind-the-scenes tours of the Research Center will take visitors back in time to view the historic areas where scientists discovered the long-lasting impacts of pesticides such as DDT on migratory birds. They will also be introduced to cutting-edge research on elusive diving ducks and endangered whooping cranes, which are being raised at Patuxent and taught to migrate behind ultralight aircraft to establish new self-sustaining populations."

Brad Knudsen, Refuge Manager, emphasizes the importance of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Patuxent Research Refuge as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. "Besides it's critical role of supporting state-of-the-art research, the Refuge provides a unique and valued 'oasis' of forests, meadows and wetlands in the midst of the Baltimore/Washington corridor.

Not only is it a refuge for a multitude of wild creatures, but the undeveloped habitats provide a welcome escape for many urban dwellers who seek the solitude of natural places. The Refuge also provides a special place for today's youth to discover a 'Sense of Wonder' about the mysteries of nature through hands-on interpretive and educational experiences."

The National Wildlife Visitor Center is located at 10901 Scarlet Tanager Loop (off Powder Mill Road between the Baltimore Washington Parkway and Rt. 197), just south of Laurel, MD. For more information please call 301.497.5763 or TDD 301.497.5779. If you have any special needs please contact the Refuge at least two weeks prior to the event so that we may accommodate you. For more information or directions visit <http://patuxent.fws.gov>

NOTE: Media access to behind the scenes research areas may be arranged by calling the above contact numbers.

-USFWS/USGS-